

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STARK VOTES AGAINST CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

WASHINGTON - Today, U.S. Rep. Pete Stark (D-Fremont) voted against a Constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the flag. It passed the House by a vote of 286-130.

The text of Stark's statement follows:

"Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.J.Res. 10, which proposes a Constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the flag, because what people do with a piece of fabric, however meaningful, is not worthy of Congressional intervention. Flag burning has as much to do with patriotism as weapons of mass destruction had to do with our invasion of Iraq.

"This is not the first time the Republican Majority has sought to divert attention from otherwise pressing matters. This body could be focusing on providing health insurance to our nation's 45 million uninsured, improving our public education system, addressing our swollen deficit, or any number of equally important issues. Instead we are mired in the issues of Terri Schiavo, steroids in professional sports and flag burning.

"If we wanted to show our patriotism and support our troops there are tangible options available. We could focus, instead, on providing them with enough bulletproof vests, ensuring veterans have access to the best possible health care, and sending our troops into war only as a last resort. Perhaps if the members of this body were so concerned with a symbol of democracy, an effort could be made by our leaders to hold themselves to the highest ethical standards.

"Mr. Speaker, how patriotic do you think the American people feel when a chief negotiator of the Medicare drug bill leaves Congress to become the head of the pharmaceutical industry's lobbying group? How much pride in our democracy do Americans have when they learn that the President was planning to invade Iraq months before he bothered to tell them about it? How should the American people feel when they learn the Republican Majority votes to cut health care for millions of impoverished Americans and then boosts funding for no-bid defense contracts to Halliburton?

"The Republican Majority consistently doesn't support our troops and has sold the

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government to the nation's wealthiest corporations; a debate about flag burning will not change these facts. Mr. Speaker, I will not vote to undermine our freedoms and make a mockery of our Constitution."